Your observation about combining road and railway bridges is a sound one. It struck me that that should have been done, when I saw the Chengannur bridge. I asked Mr. Marini if a railway could be carried over the bridge, and he answered in the negative. I considered whether the two other bridges under construction on that road, namely, the Varattar and the Tondara bridges, could not be combined road and railway bridges. But I found that one of them was going to cost only Rs. 30,000 and that the other was but a restoration work. I thought that it would not, on the whole, be advantageous to put off these two comparatively small works till the railway alignment was settled and I let them proceed.

In regard to land acquisition, I am sorry that there is a good deal of misapprehension on the part of the Revenue officers. Many of them do not read the Regulation. I have had to point out in more cases than one that there was a clause in the Regulation which empowered the Government to declare a case as urgent, and take immediate possession of the land. Similarly, there are clear provisions in the Regulation for fixing the value of land. If the acquiring officer is only careful, no difficulty can occur and he can fix the compensation almost to the rupee. In British India if the final compensation exceeds 10 per cent of the estimated cost, the officer is called upon to explain and is eventually punished if his calculation is glaringly incorrect. Here also such officers will have to be booked sharply. It is the Revenue officer that will have to remedy this defect. There is no defect in the Regulation.

Then with regard to the railway towards the Cochin Harbour, the date of the railway does not depend solely upon the Cochin Harbour. But the two things are so intertwined that it would be advantageous to wait a little to see what the final settlement would be between Travancore and Cochin and British India in regard to the Harbour. No doubt, the Cochin Government would agree to construct the line within that State up to its boundary; but that is only for 12 miles, whereas the railway line in Travancore would be more than 100 miles in length. Then the question would arise as to what is the probable cost. Very probably 2 crores may be required. Next we have to settle what each State should pay. It is going to be a costly work as it traverses through a difficult country. The question of financing it is also a very important one and it would be to our advantage to wait a little before we take it up.

You have also touched on the question of the Cochin Harbour itself. As I have said on another public occasion, I am sorry that I am not in a position to issue a Press Communiquè in that matter, because the correspondence is still in a confidential stage. But I can tell you this much, that it is one of vital importance to Travancore. It is not merely a question of an advantage to Travancore, but it is much more than that.

In regard to the disadvantages to which north and central Travancore are subject in the matter of roads, that is a matter on which there can be no two opinions. It is true that these parts of the country are not half so well served by roads as south Travancore. But what is the good of mourning over that matter? You should be glad that south Travancore at least is served well by roads. It must be our effort to open up north and central Travancore more and more by the construction of new roads. In that direction Government are doing their utmost. After all, our finances are limited and Government are doing whatever they can for improving the communications in north and central Travancore and you should also remember that north and central Travancore possess one advantage over south Travancore, *viz.*, in the matter of water communications.

VI. PUBLIC HEALTH, MUNICIPAL COUNCILS AND MEDICAL RELIEF.

(1) Municipal Councils.

94. Some needs of the Padmanabhapuram Municipality.

Mr. P. N. Ramasvamy Aiyar (Member, Municipal Council, Padmanabhapuram) acknowledged in grateful terms the policy adopted by the Government in regard to

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

the democratisation of municipal administration and the healthy scope thus afforded for the progressive expansion of municipal activities. He then urged the following points being kept in view by Government in adopting a definite principle in their dealings with municipalities :—

(1) the introduction of a uniform method of account keeping;

(2) the necessity for municipal reports and Government reviews being made fuller and more interesting;

(3) the appointment of a Municipal Inspector as in Madras;

(4) persuading Municipalities to undertake public works of sanitary utility even on borrowed capital, if necessary;

(5) the desirability of Government nominations being made from among young men who have made a study of municipal subjects;

(6) the announcement of a well-defined policy in the matter of the award of Government grants to Municipalities; and

(7) the propagation of knowledge in municipal matters by stocking the public and municipal libraries in the State with copies of standard works on municipal subjects, by encouraging translations of such works by means of Government patronage, by public lectures and by the inclusion of a study of municipal subjects in the school curricula.

Next coming to the Padmanabhapuram Municipality, the Member represented that the rate-payers were poor and the town malarious. He, therefore, pressed for a decent grant being continued to the Municipality for some years more. The town of Padmanabhapuram which was healthy till about 1060 M. E. became unhealthy subsequently and that it was necessary that Government should undertake an enquiry into the causes of the present unhealthiness and adopt the necessary remedial measures. The opening of more gates in the Padmanabhapuram Fort and the encouragement of tree-growth on the Velimala hills had been suggested as some of the remedial measures, but it was for the special officer in the Medical Department charged with the duty of investigating such diseases to go to the spot and find out the real remedy. That officer should be asked to move to Padmanabhapuram for the purpose.

Lastly, the Member submitted that the office of the Municipality now held in a room in the Division Cutcherry within the Fort should be shifted to a more convenient site and requested that the open site at Thuckalay between the Vakils' Association hall and the Police Station building might be granted to the Council to put up their own office building.

Dewan's reply.—I shall ask the Peishkar whether the site between the local Munsiff's Court and the Police Station, mentioned by you, could be handed over to your Council for the construction of an office building.

In regard to malaria, the Special Medical Officer, Mr. Alexander, will shortly proceed to Padmanabhapuram.

In regard to the lack of uniformity in the keeping of municipal accounts and the question of enhanced powers to Municipal Councils, both these matters are engaging my attention. I realise that more powers of expenditure should devolve on the Councils. A Municipal Manual is needed, as also standardised forms of municipal accounts. I shall look into these matters and pass orders as early as practicable.

I do not think that we want an Inspector for the 19 Municipalities in the State. It means additional expenditure to Government. All the Municipalities are so near one another and the Peishkars must be in close touch with them. Questions of general importance must be brought up before the Peishkars, and they should either write to Government, or the Municipal Presidents and Vice-Presidents should meet at an annual conference, discuss broad questions of policy and formulate the necessary proposals. I think that would be much better than having an Inspector.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

You say that municipal grants are given without any principle. I may tell you that it is not so. One principle in awarding these grants is the extent to which the Municipalities help themselves. Another principle laid down by me is that, if a Municipality will look into a scheme relating to the health or improvement of the town in all its details, and submit practical proposals to Government, Government should see how far they can help the Municipality in the execution of the scheme.

Your suggestion that books on municipal health and municipal and civic amenities should be translated into the vernacular seems to be a good one. I shall bring it to the notice of the Public Lecture Committee and the Economic Development Board.

95. Some urgent needs of the town of Colachel.

Mr. N. Kunjen Pillai (Member, Municipal Council, Colachel) observed that the Municipalities in Travancore could not be compared with those in British India where the surrounding villages were brought under municipal administration in the event of a particular Municipality being unable to find funds to meet its expenditure. Again, the minimum standard of population for the creation of a Municipal Council was 20,000. In Travancore, the conditions were different. The people were accustomed to village life and, if they lived in towns, it was out of necessity due to business connections, official and non-official. By transferring their residence to urban areas under these circumstances, the people were not benefited. It was, therefore, not possible for them to pay any increased rates of taxation usually levied by Municipalities elsewhere. Coming to the Colachel Municipal Council, the Member stated that the total population of that Municipality was only 8,000, of whom about one-half were living in huts and were, therefore, absolutely unable to pay house-tax or any other tax. The Council found it very difficult, with its extremely slender resources, to make both ends meet and stood in need of replenishment from the accumulated surplus of any of the neighbouring Municipalities or of increased grant from the Government.

The Member then spoke about the need for constructing a pier at Colachel. All the articles of export were now being sent either to Tuticorin or Cochin, which caused an additional expenditure of Rs. 2 to Rs. 2½ per cwt. in transport. There would be no harm in levying on the merchants and tradesmen a tax to the above amount, in the event of a pier being constructed. The argument that the Cochin Harbour Scheme, when carried out, would benefit them could not be maintained for the reason that their trade was solely with Colombo which was nearer Tuticorin than Cochin. The Member said that on a former occasion he had proposed to have cheap estimates for the pier and the Government also seemed to favour the idea and even took some steps in pursuance of that view. In the circumstances, the Member prayed that his proposal might not be held in further abeyance and that it might be put into execution ere long. Lastly, he brought to the notice of Government that the factories in Colachel were making labourers of tender age work from morning till evening at very low rates of wages. There was also no provision for attending to their health or for maintaining sanitation. It was high time that Government interfered and took steps to set matters right.

Dewan's reply.—You have touched on the general question of municipal taxation. The matter has been threshed out so often that I do not think that we are going to have any advantage by expatiating on it again. I have already enunciated the policy of Government in regard to finance. I do not want that every place should be raised to the level of a Municipality. If a place is not fit to be a Municipality, it should be taken out of the pale of municipal administration. You said that n British India only places having a population of 20,000 are Municipalities. This s wrong. In British India the minimum population for a Municipality is 10,000 in h e plains, but there are two or three towns where the population is even less, which a ve been converted into Municipalities for special reasons. Anantapur is a Municiality of that type. The population there is 7,000 only. A certain amount of money

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly